

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, July 8, 2016**

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## Action Item Calendar

**Today** (July 8) – [Evaluation](#) data due  
July 15 – [Housing Aid](#) applications due  
July 15 – [Physical-restraint](#) data due  
August 1 – Fast-Track [Repair Program](#) intent letter  
August 19 – [School Bus Monitor Variance](#) requests due

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## Notes from Commissioner Wagner

### 1. Governor Raimondo speaks to all about recent events of violence

In the wake of the shooting deaths that have shocked and saddened so many Americans, Governor Raimondo joined law-enforcement officers and community leaders to address these recent events of violence. Governor Raimondo noted:

It is time to say enough. Enough violence. Enough hate. Enough tragedies. It is a time for healing, time for peacefulness, time for unity.

Let's commit to being a community that rejects violence and

poverty, and embraces diversity and civility. I believe we can be bolder. I believe that our families, neighborhoods, state and country can do better, and I believe we can move forward together.

Today our emotions are raw. We are all filled with a mix of shock, anger, frustration. If anything good can come of these horrific killings, let's replace these emotions with respect, unity and action to bring about a more just, equal and peaceful Rhode Island.

## **2. Information available on new Rhode Island Seal of Biliteracy**

Last month, the General Assembly passed legislation on the Seal of Biliteracy, which “establishes a state seal of biliteracy to recognize high-school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English.” The bill passed thanks to the support of Sen. Juan M. Pichardo and Rep. Teresa Ann Tanzi, the leadership of the Rhode Island Foreign Language Association (outgoing president Erin Papa and incoming president Sarah Steverman), and the piloting by Central Falls ESL Director Evelyn Cosme-Jones and Superintendent Victor Capellan. The Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners and the Rhode Island EL Advisory Council also contributed to the success of this bill by offering written letters of support.

To read more about the bill, please see the [General Assembly press release](#). To read more about the first 14 graduates from Central Falls to earn the seal of biliteracy, see this story from Rhode Island Public Radio: [“For RI Students Fluent In A Second Language, Recognition On Their High School Diploma.”](#) For more

information about educator resources for world-language learners, please see the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [website](#), which includes:

- [Oral Proficiency Levels in the Workplace chart](#);
- [ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages](#);
- and
- [ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners](#).

### **3. R.I. students win national awards in CTE competition**

Congratulations to the 81 students from Rhode Island (including some postsecondary students) who competed last month in the Skills USA championships for career-technical education (CTE). The team of Leah Costa-Truck, Quinn Hoyle, and Kathryn Myrtle, from the Chariho Area Career & Technical Center, won a National Silver Medal in the area of crime-scene investigations. Justin Shappy, also from Chariho, won a National Silver Medal in the area of technical computer applications. The Cranston Area Career & Technical Center led the way among Rhode Island schools with seven students or teams finishing in the top ten in their competitions.

Additionally, Tyler LaValley, of Chariho, took third place in the CareerSafe National Youth Safety Video Contest. You can see his video here:

[https://youtu.be/ux7tq\\_GPq7U](https://youtu.be/ux7tq_GPq7U)

### **4. 2016 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching state finalists selected**

The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) is the highest recognition that a kindergarten through 12th-grade mathematics or science teacher in the U.S. can receive for outstanding teaching. Enacted by Congress in 1983, this program authorizes the President to bestow up to 108 awards each year. The National Science Foundation administers PAEMST on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

This year, the 2016 state finalists for K-6 science teaching, who become candidates for selection as national award winners, are Karen Moore, from the Howard Hathaway Elementary School, in Portsmouth, and Alyssa Wood, from the Sophia Academy, a nonpublic school in Providence. These two educators exemplify the highest standards of science teaching and serve as models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities, and leaders in the improvement of science education. Congratulations Karen and Alyssa!

## **5. 2 R.I. educators named Students at the Center Distinguished Fellows**

Jobs for the Future has selected two Rhode Island educators to be part of its inaugural cohort of Students at the Center Distinguished Fellows. The fellows will “investigate, use, and promote effective renditions of student-centered learning” and will communicate their research findings. Arthur Baraf, principal of the Liberty School at The Met, will be one of three “practitioner fellows,” and Lori Batista McEwen, of the Providence Public School Department, will be one of three “policy fellows.” Congratulations to Arthur and Lori on this exciting opportunity.

## **6. Blog entry posted on the future of public education in Rhode Island**

As part of its online blog “This Is What’s Next,” the Rhode Island Foundation has posted my essay on the future of public education in Rhode Island, which you can read here:

<http://www.rifoundation.org/TransformingRhodeIsland/WhatsNextbyKenWagner.aspx> .

**From RIDE**

***Legal:***

## **7. Commissioner’s decisions issued on DCYF, out-of-district career-preparation enrollment, communications with parent, textbooks**

Please see these recently issued Commissioner’s decisions:

When parents of a child in DCYF custody reside in two different towns, the town in which the child actually lives with his father (when not in state custody), rather than the town in which his non-custodial parent resides, is responsible for payment of a per-pupil special education cost to DCYF, pursuant to RIGL 16-64-1.2:

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DPCS/2016/015-16 DCYF v. Foster-Glocester and N. Providence RE-Residency of N.M. 06222016.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DPCS/2016/015-16%20DCYF%20v.%20Foster-Glocester%20and%20N.%20Providence%20RE-Residency%20of%20N.M.%2006222016.pdf)

Student was entitled to the entry of an interim protective order under RIGL § 16-39-3.2 to enable her to enforce the Commissioner's June 1 decision affirming her right to attend an out-of-district career-preparation program in agricultural science pending the School Committee's appeal of the decision:

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/D  
OCS/2016/016-  
16A H. Doe v. Chariho RSC 06302016.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/D<br/>OCS/2016/016-<br/>16A H. Doe v. Chariho RSC 06302016.pdf).

Decision of the school district to restrict parent's communication with her child's teachers was not shown to be unreasonable, arbitrary, capricious, or in violation of state or federal education law; however, an indefinite ban would prevent teachers who will be working with this child in the upcoming school year from establishing meaningful, two-way communication and would inhibit the creation of a positive relationship between parent and teacher as partners in the education process. Therefore, direct parent-teacher communications are permitted during school year 2016-17 unless and until such communications are determined by district personnel to be unduly burdensome:

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/D  
OCS/2016/018-  
16 M. Doe and J. Doe V. CharihoR.S.D. 06302016.  
pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/D<br/>OCS/2016/018-<br/>16 M. Doe and J. Doe V. CharihoR.S.D. 06302016.<br/>pdf).

Public high-school students enrolled in dual-enrollment programs are entitled to have their textbooks paid for by their public-school districts of residence since under RIGL § 16-23-2(b, textbooks used in the "public schools" of the



community “shall be furnished at the expense of the community” and a public college offering dual enrollment programs functions as such a “public school”:

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/D  
OCS/2016/018-  
16 M. Doe and J. Doe V. CharihoR.S.D. 06302016.  
pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/D<br/>OCS/2016/018-<br/>16_M._Doe_and_J._Doe_V._CharihoR.S.D._06302016.<br/>pdf).

***Educators:***

**8. RIDE forms partnership to learn, share information about evaluation of special educators**

RIDE has formed a partnership with Project Validating an Observation for Special Educators (VOISE), a study supporting observations of special educators using Danielson’s Framework for Teaching. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the effectiveness of this tool for evaluating special-education teachers and to provide Rhode Island schools with information that can support administrators in evaluating special educators. This study will take place during the coming school year and will be conducted by researchers at Boston University, the Educational Testing Service (ETS), and the University of Florida.

For more information on Project VOISE, see:

Project VOISE: <http://sites.bu.edu/voise/>; and

Project VOISE Information Video:  
<https://youtu.be/wGlgtFgxmyc>.

For questions regarding the study or to share your interest in participating, please contact Nathan Jones (Study Director), at [ndjones@bu.edu](mailto:ndjones@bu.edu), or Carolina Castro, at [Carolina.Castro@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Carolina.Castro@ride.ri.gov).

## **9. RIDE seeks public comment on new certification tests**

Last month, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approved for public comment three new tests for certification. The ETS (the Educational Testing Service), the testing company that we use in Rhode Island regarding certification, regenerated English to Speakers of Other Languages (5362) that we have used for certification, and the ETS is phasing out the older test, which affects Rhode Island certification. In addition, we will add two new tests that ETS offers. The two new tests that we will adopt are Braille Proficiency (0633) and American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI) (0634). RIDE is seeking public comment from the education field and the public at large on the proposed certification tests and passing scores for initial educator certification in Rhode Island. To provide comments on the proposed certification tests and passing scores, please visit <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Certification-Updates>. If you have any questions about these tests, please feel free to contact Hilda Potrzeba, at [hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov](mailto:hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8891.

## **10. RIDE seeks educator-leader to work at RIDE on leadership initiatives**

Our strategic plan (2020 Vision for Education) includes a vision for growing and supporting leaders. We are seeking an experienced educator-leader to work at RIDE during the coming school year to

help define and implement the vision of the strategic plan regarding leadership initiatives. This individual will work as a fellow, on loan from his or her school district. Please use this link to access the application and more information:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/RIDEOffices/EducatorQualityCertification.aspx>.

### **From the U.S. Department of Education (USED)**

#### **11. Resources posted on restorative justice, bullying prevention**

States and districts are increasingly in support of policies and practices that shift school discipline away from zero tolerance, such as suspension and expulsion, to discipline that is focused on teaching and engagement. To this effort, districts and states are [rethinking discipline](#) and adopting both [Restorative Justice Practices](#) and Bullying Prevention as schoolwide efforts to provide school staff with a set of preventative and responsive strategies to supporting positive student behaviors. On its official blog, Homeroom, the USED has posted information and links to resources on restorative justice and bullying prevention:

<http://blog.ed.gov/2016/03/restorative-justice-practices-and-bullying-prevention/>

#### **12. USED issues notices of proposed rule-making on assessments**

In October, President Obama announced a [Testing Action Plan](#), putting forward a set of principles and steps to restore balance to America's classrooms and protecting the vital role that good

assessments play in guiding progress for students while providing help in unwinding practices that have burdened classroom time or not served students, educators, or families well. That plan acknowledged the role that this Administration has, at times, had to play in the overuse of testing and set forth a new vision for the role assessments should play in schools.

Consistent with the President's plan, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) ensures annual information about students' progress for parents, educators, and policymakers while helping states and districts improve and reduce testing. The law commits resources for states to improve their assessment systems by reviewing their existing assessments to ensure that each test is high quality, maximizes instructional goals, has a clear purpose, and is designed to help students demonstrate progress. In addition, the law creates flexibility for state and local leaders to think creatively – beyond just test scores and graduation rates – about how to measure school quality. The law also enables state and local leaders and educators to eliminate redundant or unnecessary tests by auditing their assessment systems and to start piloting innovative approaches to next-generation assessments.

ESSA presents an opportunity to reclaim the promise of a high-quality, well-rounded education for every student by reducing the focus on testing while ensuring critical protections for all students. [As part of its ongoing effort to seize that opportunity through implementation of the law, the U.S. Department of Education is releasing two Notices of Proposed Rulemaking \(NPRM\).](#) Together, they implement provisions of Title I of ESSA that seek to ensure states administer high-quality assessments that are worth taking and provide meaningful data about student success and equity while encouraging states and districts to

continue to push the field of assessment forward through innovation.

### **13. Secretary King addresses discipline, diversity**

Last week, Education Secretary John B. King, Jr., delivered two significant policy addresses, calling on charter public schools to become leaders in rethinking student discipline and parents and teachers to promote student and teacher diversity.

First, at the National Charter Schools Conference, in Nashville, he encouraged charter schools to “focus on innovating to lead the way for our children.” ([remarks](#) and [video](#)).

To shine a light on best practices in school discipline, the USED supported creation of a [suite of resources](#) by the National Charter Schools Resource Center to help charter school leaders as they rethink discipline practices. These resources include a toolkit for practitioners, a set of case studies that chronicle the choices and implementation dynamics experienced by charter-school leaders, and a compendium of professional development tools. Also, the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice have worked with educators through the [#RethinkDiscipline campaign](#).

Second, at the National PTA Convention, in Orlando, Secretary King urged parents and teachers to take charge of improving diversity in their classrooms and schools. “Today, diversity it not a nicety but a necessity, not just for some students but for all our students,” he said. “What I’m asking you today is to act not only in the interest of someone else’s kids but also to act boldly in the interest of your own. I’m asking you to demand diversity, not just in schools but also in the classrooms within those schools. It’s not enough for kids from diverse background to just pass each other

in the hallways or on the playground. True diversity requires students to actually learn alongside one another” ([video](#) and an *Atlantic* [article](#)).

#### **14. USED reports spending on prisons, jails increasing at triple the rate of education spending**

This week, the USED issued a report revealing that state and local spending on prisons and jails has increased at triple the rate of funding for public preschool-through-twelfth-grade in the last three decades. “[Trends in State and Local Expenditures on Corrections and Education](#)” notes that, even when population changes are factored in, 23 states increased per capita spending on corrections at more than double the rate of increases in per-pupil PK-12 spending, and 7 states increased corrections budgets more than five times as fast as allocations for PK-12 education ([press call audio](#) and [post on Medium](#)).

Last fall, former Secretary Arne Duncan advised states and communities to invest in teachers rather than prisons by finding alternative paths for nonviolent offenders of incarceration, noting the \$15 billion that could be saved by finding alternate paths for just half of nonviolent offenders is enough for a 50-percent raise to every teacher and principal working in high-needs schools and communities ([remarks](#) and [state analysis](#)).

#### **15. USED evaluates states on implementation of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

As required by law, the USED has issued annual [determination letters](#) regarding states’ implementation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). Each state was evaluated on key indicators under Part B (ages 3 through 21) and Part C (infants

through age 2) and placed into one of four categories: meets requirements, needs assistance, needs intervention, and needs substantial intervention. Most states fell into the top two groups; 26 states met requirements for Part B, and 30 states met requirements for Part C. No state needs substantial intervention. The IDEA identifies specific technical assistance or enforcement actions that the agency must undertake for states that do not meet requirements. [The USED determined that Rhode Island “needs assistance in implementing the requirements of Part B of the *IDEA*.”]

### **From other organizations**

#### **16. Rhode Island Foundation seeks investments officer for education grants**

The Rhode Island Foundation is seeking a Strategic Investments Officer for education grants (replacing Toby Shepherd, who will become Director of the Sheila C. “Skip” Nowell Leadership Academy). To apply, go to:

<http://www.rifoundation.org/Inside.../JobsattheFoundation.aspx>

The application deadline is July 22.

#### **17. Lecture series to be held in September on assessment literacy**

Join the Center for Assessment and expert colleagues the Reidy Interactive Lecture Series, “Assessment Literacy: Key skills to

effectively use assessment information,” which will take place on September 29 and 30, in Portsmouth, N.H.

The series will examine these and other questions:

How do instructional, accountability, and program evaluation uses of assessment require different types of assessment information?

How are assessment literacy, measurement literacy, and data literacy all necessary for powerful use of assessment information?

How do savvy users bring together information from formative, interim, and summative assessments with other information to inform decisions and actions?

What do expert users look for when evaluating the quality of assessments?

How can assessment literacy be scaled up and maintained in real-world educational settings?

For more information about the program, and to register online visit:

<http://www.nciea.org/conferences/2016-rils-conference/>

**August 25** is the deadline for reduced registration fee and sleeping rooms.

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***



<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/FieldMemos.aspx>